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ABSTRACT

The first and most often cited problem of part-time teachers is the question of remuneration. Most part-timers are paid a per-course amount which almost never represents a true pro-rata proportion of a full-time salary at the same institution. Another problem which often concerns part-timers is that they are not eligible for health insurance or retirement programs and are often excluded from many other fringe benefits accorded to full-time colleagues. A third familiar complaint is the lack of status within the department and the academic community. Part-timers find they are excluded from opportunities for professional growth and from possibilities for recognition and reward. A survey of full- and part-time English faculty found that most part-time teachers work in higher education for much the same reasons as full-timers do--because they love teaching, are good at it, and enjoy being a part of the academic community. Major reasons given for choosing part-time work over full-time were the lack of a PhD and the working hours. Teachers who work part-time would like to: be recompensed fairly for the work they do, be seen as significant members of their departments, participate on committees and in decision making processes, have time and opportunities for research and professional development, and enjoy respect from their administrators and colleagues. (Two figures are included.) (MG)

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Part-Time Teachers - or Teachers, Who Work Part-Time?

Paper presented at CCCC, March 22nd. 1991

by

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"Part-time teachers" -- or "teachers, who work part-time"?

The Conference on College Communication and Composition estimates that "[m]ore than half the English faculty in two-year colleges, and nearly one-third of the English faculty at four-year colleges and universities, work on part-time and/or temporary appointments. Almost universally they are teachers of writing" (330). As many in the profession are aware, these part-time teachers of English work, for the most part, in singularly unsatisfactory conditions. Recently, the most vocal part-timers seem to have been those who want to work full-time, but I would like to speak for those of us who work part-time by choice. For me, part-time employment makes it possible to pay my children's school fees, to be there when they need me, and to obtain personal and professional satisfaction. Part-time teaching answers my current needs, and although I fully support those of us who do want to work full-time, I would like in this article to address particularly the needs of those of us who choose to work part-time. Like our colleagues, we want and deserve professional respect, and appropriate compensation for our work.

We have all heard much about the problems of part-time teaching, and those of us who are part-timers are only too familiar with these problems. At the risk of drifting into yet another fruitless lamentation, I would like to consider some of the major disadvantages to being an adjunct or special faculty member, a part-timer, a moonlighter.

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Modern Languages Association in 1983, Elizabeth Wallace identifies the following as some of

the problems faced by part-time staff: "per-course salaries, lack of college-paid benefits, job insecurity, and invisibility on campus" (1). Katherine Staples lists the same problems, and adds that part-timers typically have "no departmental voice in policy or decision-making" (3). A reluctant part-timer, cited in Lundy and Warme's 1985 paper, laments that "[d]epartments rely on our teaching but exclude us not only from department meetings, but even from social events" (11).

Let us consider these issues one at a time. The first and most often cited problem of not being full-time is the question of remuneration. I conducted a survey at my own institution, and I would like to quote a couple of my full-time colleagues: "I don't work part-time because I don't want to be treated like a slave," said one; and another commented, "Half-time teaching equals one-fourth or one-fifth salary." Most full-time faculty receive a yearly salary. Among part-timers, however, there is a much greater variation in the ways in which pay is calculated. Most of us are paid a per-course amount. The rate of this, again, varies drastically from one institution to another, but almost nowhere does it represent a true *pro-rata* proportion of a full-time salary at the same institution.

I know there is a ready-made answer to that complaint. I hear it all the time from full-time colleagues (yes, even from my husband). Full-timers earn <u>much</u> more than we do because they a) do research and b) have other responsibilities such as committee membership, and so forth. If it were true that the majority of part-timers wanted only to teach, that might possibly be a valid argument, though even so I might respond that teaching, like research or being on a committee, is an old and respected profession and deserves recognition. But that is beside the point. Nobody asked me if I would

like to do research part time, or to be on a committee part time. Even though I am only a part-timer, I would like to be involved in meetings and committee work, and would enjoy the interaction with my colleagues and the departmental influence which go along with such assignments. I love research and writing. When students ask what I write I am ashamed to admit I don't - partly because there is no incentive, part-timers are not expected to publish - but chiefly because I have no time for it. When I am allocated 3/4 of a full load, I'd very much like to be allocated 1/4 teaching, 1/4 research and 1/4 committee assignments. But not many institutions offer such an option to part-timers .

And while we are on the subject of pay, let us not forget that for many of us, payment on a per-course basis would be a luxury. At one institution (which alas is not an exception) I was paid by the hour. And I was paid for five hours a week to teach a four-hour composition course. That means I was paid for 15 minutes per class period to prepare my lectures, grade papers, meet with my students, and do the reading and research necessary to keep abreast of my profession. I can tell you, that did not do a great deal for my professional self-image!

The argument is often advanced that our employers could not afford to pay us on a *pro-rata* basis, that we represent a necessary economy. But in the words of Helen Parramore Twigg:

> Can you think of another situation where the lack of operating funds in an essential industry is made up by disenfranchising and impoverishing half or more of the absolutely essential skilled workers? Can you think of another profession that would tolerate it? (5)

Another problem which often concerns part-timers is the lack of

benefits available. Most part-time faculty are not eligible for health insurance or retirement programs offered to our full-time colleagues. In most cases it is not even possible for us to "buy in" to such systems by making voluntary payments ourselves. For the part-timer who is a faculty spouse, this is not such a serious matter in practical terms. But there are among us very many single parents, and many more for whom part-timing, often at more than one institution to make ends meet, is the only source of family income. For them this situation is grossly unjust and discriminatory. And anyway, even those of us who are covered by our spouse's benefits have an equal right to our own independence and security. Why should we have to depend on someone else for that security?

Aside from the obvious lack of health insurance and retirement benefits, we are usually excluded from many other fringe benefits accorded our full-time colleagues. For example, my institution offers tuition waivers to full-time faculty and their spouses, and to full-time non-teaching staff and their spouses, with waivers of half the tuition to full-timers' children. But part-timers and their families are not eligible for any tuition waivers, even when the part-timer has taught 3/4 of a full load for several years. If I write a check in the college bookstore, the checker will take it at the register if I show my faculty spouse card. But if I attempt to use my part-time faculty ID, I must go to the cashier's window, like the students, and have my check pre-approved before I can use it at the register. Similar disparities are in force at the library, and in the issuing of parking permits. The "Y-News" is a faculty newsletter deposited weekly in the mailbox of every full-time faculty member. But part-timers do not get it. Most full-timers would gladly give us their copies - they don't want it! But that's not

the point, is it? If faculty members get a newsletter, and we don't, then who are we? When our names are not listed in the faculty directory, who are we? If our office doors don't carry our names, who are we? When we are listed in the class schedule as 'staff,' who are we?

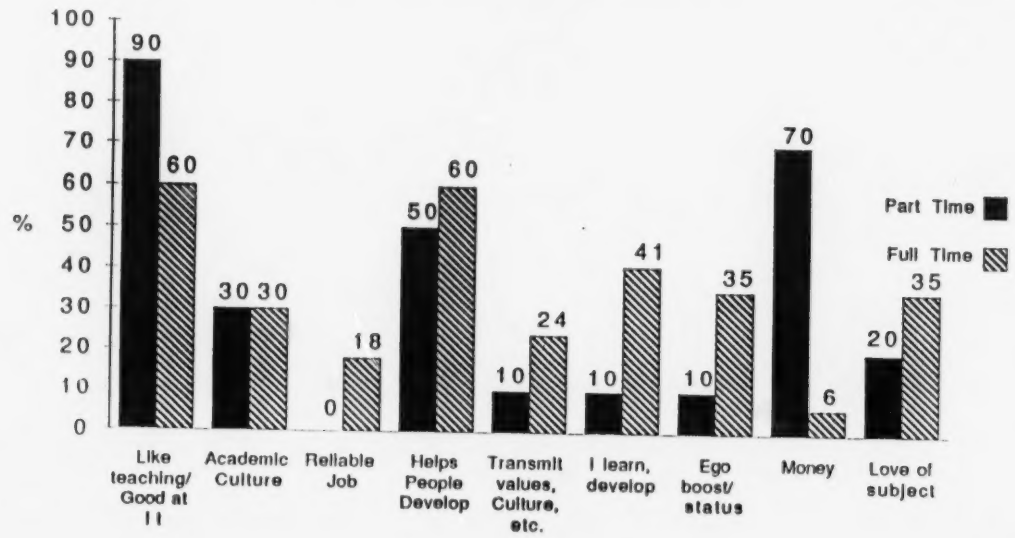
Which brings us to another familiar complaint - lack of status within the department and the academic community. Elizabeth Wallace was "saddened and discouraged by [her] exclusion from faculty governance, from opportunities for professional growth, from possibilites for recognition and reward" (6). As Katherine Staples notes, "I was, after all, not a colleague"(3) In his 1987 article Clifton Wharton states that often part-timers "experience a kind of marginality within the campus community that is as economically constraining as it is professionally demoralizing" (8). One of the part-timers interviewed by Lundy and Warme lamented, "That we are grossly exploited financially is accepted and hard enough to take. However, that we are regarded perpetually as inferiors, at best with condescension and often with outright disrespect, is insulting beyond belief" (11). Nor is it only within the university that this perception of part-timers as 'second-class citizens' exists; Lundy and Warme report the following exchange: "A man (outside academe) asked if I were a full-time professor and I said, 'No.' He said, 'Then you are not a <u>real</u> professor, are you?'" (12). Of course, many of our full-time colleagues do treat us with respect and on a professionally equal footing. But too many still do not.

In most cases, part-timers are not expected to conduct research or to publish. This is perhaps just as well, since, as Staples notes, "given the time-consuming nature of writing instruction, they find it difficult to publish" (1), a view shared by Lundy and Warme who point out that "[s]pending

time and energy on teaching, usually including summers, means there is little left for research and publishing" (12). This lack of time, resources, and incentive for research further widens the gap between full-timers and part-timers, who are often perceived as 'just' teachers, and therefore inferior since "[t]he area in which part-time faculty might be able to excel, namely teaching, is accorded secondary importance" (Lundy and Warme 15). And there is still more inequity out there! For example, my institution offers an award for teaching excellence (in contrast to research efforts). A blow for freedom for 'just' teachers? Yes - but not for part-timers. To be eligible you must be - you've guessed it - a full-time faculty member!

Given the bleak situation of so many part-timers, why then would anyone want to do it? Well, I must admit that the pay is better than I would get for a similar number of hours per week tossing hamburgers. (Though I did take rather longer in my professional training than the average burger-tosser, and I do tend to take just a little more of my work home at night than they do.) And not surprisingly, money is a major reason why most part-timers work (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Reasons for teaching:P/T & F/T

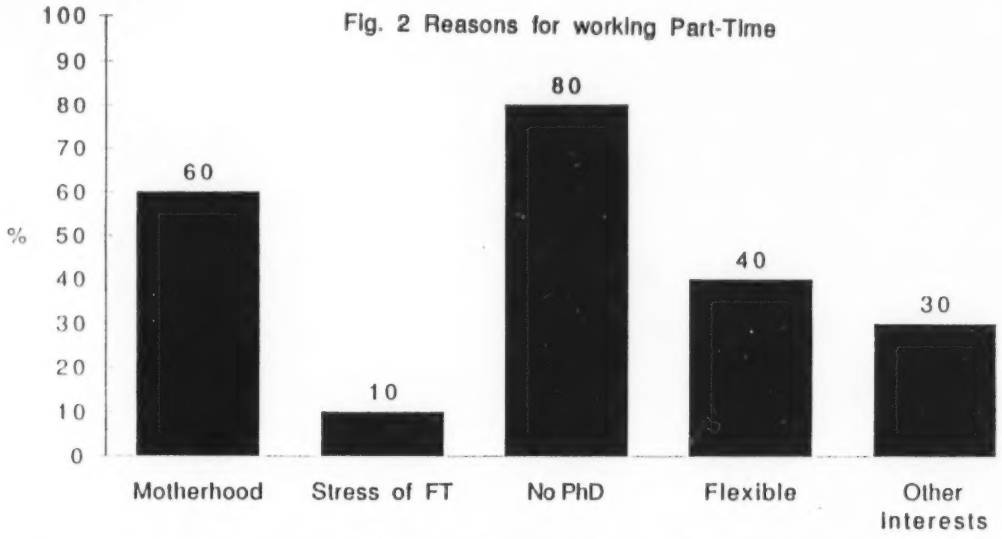


Surveying the full-and part-time faculty at my own university, I found that 70% of part-timers work for the money, compared to 6% of full-timers. (However, when full-timers were asked why they work full-time not part-time, the financial factor went up to 60%.) It is interesting to note that money was not the number one reason why part-timers teach. 90% of part-timers do it because they love teaching, and 30% because they like to be part of the academic culture. Leslie *et al.* recorded similar findings: "The intrinsic stimulation of teaching and student contact is high on the agenda of most . . . part-timers" (cited in Lundy and Warme 14). So basically, most part-time teachers work in higher education, in spite of inequities in pay, benefits, status etc., for much the same reasons as full-timers do - because they love teaching, and are good at it, and because they enjoy being a part, however small, of the academic community.

Very well, but why do we work part-time rather than full time? (I would like to make a distinction here between, in the words of Lundy and Warme, "those who wished to teach part-time (the willing), and those who were teaching part-time because of their inability to find full-time work (the reluctant)" (abstract). In their study, "the willing" made up 61% of all part-timers; my own small study put the percentage at 50%. I am concerned here with those of us who are happy with part-time work, and I am not speaking for "the reluctant," who would like to work full time.)

The major reason given in my survey for choosing part-time work rather than full-time was the lack of a PhD (see Fig. 2). As one respondent put it, we are "overqualified for secondary schools, underqualified for college level." Like most of my part-timing colleagues, I can teach part-time with a Master's but no PhD. But let us consider this a little more closely. I could

spend the time, money and effort involved to get a PhD. But unless I took a PhD specifically in the teaching of writing (which are few and far between), would I really be a better teacher for those letters after my name? (As an aside, I'm not sure even a PhD in the teaching of writing would really make me that much better - based on my experiences of theory and practice at the Batchelor's and Master's levels!) And unless the PhD made me a better writing teacher, why should I jump through the hoops to obtain a useless qualification? Couldn't we perhaps be judged by other criteria, including but not limited to student evaluations, and evaluations by our composition supervisors? However, it is at least possible to teach part-time with only a Master's degree.



The next area where part-timing has an advantage over full-timing is in the matter of working hours. 60% of my part-time respondents felt, as I do, that part-time work gives them the opportunity to be a full-time mother. As one of my colleagues put it, "You can substitute 3-5 a.m. for 3-5 p.m., grading the stacks of papers after the dust settles." I have to admit I'm not perfect at mothering, and there are days when my children go to school in yesterday's dirty shirt (because I was grading papers and didn't have time for the

laundry) or in socks with holes (because I was running off handouts and didn't have time to mend) or without an empty eggbox or shoebox for art or science (because I was writing notes for this morning's class) or with homework not done (because I was meeting with students to hear their excuses for not having done their assignments); and then we have the gentle reminders from their teachers, with the implied reproof, surely as a teacher yourself you can appreciate how important this homework is!

I also have time to keep house. I'm by no means an efficient or dedicated housekeeper. But I do have an obligation to myself and to my family to ensure that our home is at least hygienic, that we receive the basic minimum FDA requirements for nourishment, and that we are not swamped in our beds by burgeoning piles of clothes, toys, papers etc. Short of earning enough to be able to pay a full-time housekeeper (which would be my first choice by a long way) I need some time when I can attack my house and beat it into submission, and this is most easily achieved when I am not accompanied by the helpful patter of tiny feet.

40% of my colleagues appreciate the flexibility of part-time employment for reasons other than motherhood; 30% have, as I do, other interests such as church and civic activities, which would be harder to fit in to a full-time schedule. Elizabeth Wallace agrees that "[p]art-time teaching can . . . be ideal . . . as long as the part-timers involved are treated like colleagues, paid fairly, and given adequate encouragement and opportunity for professional growth (like distinguished teaching awards . . ., support for attendance at conferences, and eligibility for research leaves or sabbaticals)" (6).

For those of us who choose to work part-time, the situation would not

be remedied by recommendations to transform all or most part-time positions to full-time positions. For "the willing", part-timing provides an opportunity to teach at the college level which, if all writing positions were full-time, would be denied to those of us who don't have doctoral degrees; it also provides us with academic stimulation, self-fulfillment, money and flexibility.

However, even those of us who wish to teach part-time deserve and wish to be treated with dignity, respect and justice. Judith Gappa, asking part-timers what they want, received the following responses:

> They responded that they want (1) part-time work that is well paid and more secure; (2) more choices, options and flexibility in their teaching assignments; (3) opportunities for advancement; and (4) respect and recognition for the work they do. (41)

"These," she adds, "are not unreasonable requests" (41).

In 1985 the Modern Language Association recommended that "departments should consider establishing a cadre of permanent part-time teachers. . . . these teachers should receive appropriate fringe benefits and incentives that foster professional development. . . . All part-time teachers," they say, "should be treated as professionals" (3). In 1988 the National Education Association reported and made recommendations on the employment of part-time, temporary and non-tenure track faculty. Among their recommendations, they stated that part-time faculty should receive *pro-rata* salaries and benefits. "Salary levels should be based on credentials, experience and . . . the quality of their professional activities," and they should "enjoy most of the fringe benefits . . . accorded to regular full-time faculty" (9).

Most recently the Conference on College Composition and Communication has issued its "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." The recommendations made in this document are wide-ranging, and address such concerns as salary and benefits, "a voice in the formulation of department policy, . . . access to research support and travel funds to attend professional conferences" (334), practical support such as mailboxes, telephones, clerical help etc., and conditions conducive to excellence in teaching. These conditions include writing classes of 20 or fewer students, opportunities for professional development, and office space for student conferences.

In summary, then, what we as willing part-timers would like is a fair share of what is available. We realise that we are not full-timers (though many of us do teach a full load or more), and we do not demand everything that full timers have. But we would like to affirm the statement made by the American Association of University Professors that our "contribution to the academic program of the institution and to its academic life is equal to that of a full-timer except for the proportion of time given to the position" (cited in CCCC "Statement" 333). We would like to be recompensed fairly for the work we do; we would like to be eligible for benefits as our full-time colleagues are; we would like to be seen as significant members of our departments, and to take our place on committees and in decision making processes; we would like time and opportunities for research and professional development. Above all, we would like respect from our administrators and from our colleagues; we would like to feel that we too are worthy members of a respected profession.

Speaking to part-time faculty who are not treated as they deserve,

Elizabeth Wallace concludes her paper thus:

> I want to say, 'Get out. You are immeasurably intelligent, responsible, hard-working, energetic and articulate. The business world is eager for people like you and has meaningful challenges to offer.' . . .[But if] you leave this glorious profession you will long to return to it for the rest of your life - whether or not its communal richness means personal poverty and despair for many who love it best. (12)

We don't want to leave our profession. We love it; we love our students and our work. We, the willing part-timers, do not want to be full-time faculty members. But we are educated, intelligent, qualified and effective teachers, and we would like to be recognized as such. We are not part-time teachers - we are teachers, who choose to work part-time.

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